States-Item 6/20/91

Stone's plans for Garrison movie are offensive

New Orleans

Director Oliver Stone's behavior since purchasing Jim Garrison's fictional script about the John F. Kennedy assassination is reprehensible.

Stone, in fact, exemplifies the entire coterie of self-aggrandizing acolytes who have hung onto the former district attorney's coattails since Garrison announced he had "solved" all the mysteries surrounding the presidential assassination.

That was back in 1967 and 1968, when Garrison was fabricating a new phony "conspiracy" to kill the president almost daily, including the one that ruined an innocent man's life. I know for a fact that Garrison deliberately proceeded with a fraudulent case against Clay Shaw.

He knew he had nothing, his key assistants — Jim Alcock, Al Oser and John Volz — knew he had nothing and yet proceeded in the most Machiavellian fashion to abuse the power entrusted to them.

In the style of the Dreyfus case of the last century, they deliberately selected a scapegoat for purposes totally political, totally petty, and then set about destroying one of the most creative business and cultural leaders this city has ever produced.

I know for a fact that Garrison told lies then, starting at his first big news conference on the subject. He lied to the media at large by saying he'd never been given an opportunity to comment on the New Orleans States-Item story revealing his investigation before the story was printed. And that was only the beginning.

The lies were exploded when, during a six-week trial, assorted lunatic publicity hounds — Garrison's witnesses — were exposed for what they were. The jury returned after only 50 minutes with a verdict of not guilty.

The jury was polled by the media later. Many of the jurors believed as I do that there was a conspiracy, that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone. They simply did not believe, nor did any thinking person, that Garrison and his boys had answered any questions.

In response to the June 15 letter by Jay Albarado, member of the Garrison grand jury, yes, thinking New Orleanians do believe the grand jury was duped by Garrison. We believe Garrison exerted total control over the grand jury during the period of Clay Shaw's persecution.

With regard to the three-judge panel, yes, we believe they acted as rubber stamps for Garrison, who had originally indicted Mr. Shaw with a bill of information. We believe they acquiesced to Garrison, who had considerable political swat before the trial, because they feared he would oppose them for re-election.

Now comes a gullible from La-La Land with a $60 million budget who wants to regurgitate all of that garbage.

Many of us who call New Orleans home are offended by the fact that, once again, our city is about to be propelled into the limelight as a subject of national ridicule. We are offended by Stone's comments, such as, "The truth is not important." I prefer to believe "the truth shall set ye free."

Recently, George Lardner, a respected journalist for The Washington Post who reported on Garrison's "theories" in the '60s, obtained a sub rosa copy of Stone's script for the movie and revealed its flaws in two pages of newsprint. Spies in the Stone camp report that he was livid. His public comments were straight out of the 1960s Garrison book: He described Lardner as a government agent in reporter's disguise.

Most of all, we are offended that serious money is being wasted giving credence to Jim Garrison's falsely engineered "conspiracy" case, which probably prevented serious inquiries by reasonable people into questions raised by the Warren Commission's incompetent effort.

There are reasonable theories about how the assassination was carried out, theories involving underworld figures like the late Meyer Lansky. Garrison always refused to investigate any leads that pointed in those directions. Reporters who made such suggestions were threatened personally with grand jury inquisition and indictment.

It makes you wonder what Garrison and his acolytes then and now really are about. Creating smoke screens, perhaps?

Rosemary James

Rosemary James was one of three New Orleans States-Item reporters who broke the Garrison investigation to the public, and then reported the subsequent events in both print and television media.

Carnival of